

France

Facts and Statistics

Location: Western Europe, bordering Andorra 56.6 km, Belgium 620 km, Germany 451 km, Italy 488 km, Luxembourg 73 km, Monaco 4.4 km, Spain 623 km, Switzerland 573 km

Capital: Paris

Climate: generally cool winters and mild summers, but mild winters and hot summers along the Mediterranean; occasional strong, cold, dry, north-to-northwesterly wind known as mistral

Population: 60,424,213 (July 2004 est.)

Ethnic Make-up: Celtic and Latin with Teutonic, Slavic, North African, Indochinese, Basque minorities

Religions: Roman Catholic 83%-88%, Protestant 2%, Jewish 1%, Muslim 5%-10%, unaffiliated 4%

Government: republic

Languages in France

French, the official language, is the first language of 88% of the population. Most of those who speak minority languages also speak French, as the minority languages are given no legal recognition. 3% of the population speak German dialects, predominantly in the eastern provinces of Alsace-Lorraine and Moselle. Flemish is spoken by around 90,000 people in the northeast, which is 0.2% of the French population. Around 1m people near the Italian border, roughly 1.7% of the population, speaks Italian. Basque is spoken by 0.1% and mainly along the French-Spanish border.

Catalan dialects are spoken in the French Pyrenees by around 260,000 people or 0.4% of the French population. The Celtic language, Breton, is spoken by 1.2% and mainly in the north west of France. These three languages have no official status within France.

In the South of France, over 7m speak Occitan dialects, representing 12% of the population of France, but these dialects have no official status. Nor too does Corsu, the dialect of the island of Corsica that is closely related to Tuscan and is spoken by 0.3%.

Arabic, the third largest minority language, is spoken by around 1.7% of the population throughout the country. Other immigrant languages from the former French colonies include Kabyle and Antillean Creole.

Why not learn some useful French phrases?

French Society & Culture

Cuisine

- . Food is one of the great passions of the French people.
- . French cooking is highly refined and involves careful preparation, attention to detail, and the use of fresh ingredients.
- . It varies by region and is heavily influenced by what is grown locally.

French Family Values

- . The family is the social adhesive of the country and each member has certain duties and responsibilities.
- . The extended family provides both emotional and financial support.

- . Despite their reputation as romantics, the French have a practical approach towards marriage.
- . Families have few children, but parents take their role as guardians and providers very seriously.

Relationships - Public vs. Private

- . The French are private people and have different rules of behavior for people within their social circle and those who are not.
- . Although the French are generally polite in all dealings, it is only with their close friends and family that they are free to be themselves.
- . Friendship brings with it a set of roles and responsibilities, including being available should you be needed. Friendship involves frequent, if not daily, contact.